Working paper on
"Networking as an approach for the MDM' project"

This is a working paper on the networking process of the project based on the outcomes of the workshop held by MDM for its partners. It is not an alternative to the recommendations mentioned in the report of the work shop, but it contains some ideas about implementing the recommendations adopting a networking process approach.

Intro:
Networking is a process through which 2 or more organizations co-operate to implement activities serving each of these orgs' objectives. While network is a structure through which 2 or more orgs co- operate to achieve objectives.
MDM needs a networking process approach for the following reasons:

1. MDM has no grassroot actions and will depend in implementing its project on the field work of the other 4 orgs,
2. Networking is believed to strengthen MDM's ability to significantly increase its impact as a policy negotiator and advocating agency for mental health.
3. MDM will benefit from the experiences and relations of the 4 orgs in conducting the raising awareness campaign and combating the stigma.
4. For forming information data base, MDM needs the 4 orgs to share information and spread knowledge about grassroots' needs, solutions and and best practices.

5. Networking is an important grantee for the sustainability of the project.

The suggested action plan:

i. Rationales

- To create a networking process, it is crucial to identify the common needs among the partners and establish **common interests** and keeping in mind these expectations during the whole stages of the project. It was good to have asked the participants during the workshop about the outcomes of implementing of this project on their orgs and their expectations, which are the following:
  1. At individual level they expect to develop new skills and concepts which will improve their positions in their orgs.
  2. Their orgs will gain:
     - **A.** Widening the scope of work to be integrated and holistic,
     - **B.** Developing its human resources,
     - **C.** Improving the communication with the target groups
     - **D.** Developing their relations with the local community leaders,
     - **E.** Each org will benefit from collective sharing information, resources, and experiences,
     - **F.** Getting more credits.
- One of the important points is to **share power**. Sharing power creates sense of ownership and loyality among the partners. Power is create mutual responsibilities and to reach decisions collectively.

- Another point is the **representation**. The workshop MDM conducted was attended by field-workers, as a result it was impossible to reach a code of practice because reaching a code of practice needs decision makers of the orgs to participate. Of course we do not need decision makers to attend all the activities but we need their participation in setting the priorities, approving plans of actions, celebrating achievements and solving problems. What I mean is to choose the participants according to their influence on the activities. When we plan for the TOT, we need the trainers of the partners and when we plan for combating the stigma we need the project officers and so on.
- **Data Base and Information System:** In an effective networking, there is a regular flow of information from one level to another and among different organizations and personnel. These horizontal and vertical information flows at regular intervals and demand a compact information gathering, interpreting and transmitting process. (Information in ths case is more than mere collection and compilation of data. Information is data procured for purpose). In this project, the information of situation analysis and cumulative experience – success and failure - of various activities have to be collected, stored, analysed and disseminated to the relevant personnel, and organizations to facilitate performance improvement and to nourish the advocacy activities.

- In many occasions, networking starts strong and weakens over time. These are some suggestions help to maintain the networking:
    - Establishment of communication network at different levels.
    - Regular Collection, documentation of mental health materials and information dissemination about these;
    - Arranging workshop, seminar, every 6 month to report the partners
    - Arrange linkages among the organizations for use of physical facility like training venues, equipment etc.

ii. Suggested steps:

1. Conduct a 2 hour meeting for the decision makers in the 4 orgs to motivate them to be more involved. This meeting will focus on:
    - **A.** Sharing with them the outcomes of the workshop particularly the expected outcomes of implementing the project on the target groups and their orgs.
    - **B.** Setting the priority of the coming activities or getting their approval in case u will have set the priorities.
2. Preparing for the TOT workshop, I consider this step as a real and felt need which will push the project and the networking process several steps forward. (Plz look at my recommendations in the report). To make these preparations participatory, a team (task force) is formed from 4 trainers of the orgs, 4 field workers who work directly with beneficiaries and 2 members of MDM team.
    A. The roles of this team are to:

- Define precisely the job of the trainers (the trainees after attending the workshop) in this project giving equal weights to the following components: working with marginalized groups, social aspects of mental health, and raising awareness of a community and combating a stigma.
- Setting the criteria of choosing the master trainer, and select her or him.
- Conduct a meeting with the chosen master trainer to set the agenda of the workshop
- Define the contributions of each org according to their capacities and resources
- Set a plan of follow up,
- Getting the approval of the general coordinator of MDM and the decision makers of the involved orgs

B. The roles of the 2 members of MDM:

- To make sure that all members of the team participating and the interests of the orgs are considered,
- To make sure that the training will be serving the project objectives and the attendants will be able to work with the target groups (most at risk people, community leaders, social workers and health workers)

3. Producing a simple brochure illustrating the project and highlighting the involved orgs is

urgent. The process of producing this brochure should be participatory. Another alternative to produce posters illustrating the project and high lighting the names and logos of the involved partners. These posters will be stuck somewhere in the involved orgs locations. The suggestion aims to helping the partners to keep in mind the objectives of the project and feeling a sense of ownership.

4. Regarding combating the stigma:
    A. A team (7-9) from the orgs (task force) will be formed and attend the TOT training to be empowered on how to deal and transform the conciousness of the community regarding an issue.
    B. Then the team with Dr Hany as a facilitator will set a plan to combat the stigma in their areas including the different messages to different target groups, the methodologies of dessiminating the messages and time table.
    C. The team will conduct the plan and conduct the raising awareness sessions.
    D. The team will meet regularly to reflect and discuss challenges.
5. Regarding the curricula, as I have mentioned in the report, curricula are badly needed. Building the capacities of GPs of PHC, health workers, social workers, instructors of partners' orgs and others should be systematic and effective. So a curriculum is needed for each group. The items of each curriculum are mentioned in the report. To

develop these curriculum which will be based on the need assessment held by MDM, a team (task force) will be formed and follow the same steps mentioned in the previous point.

6. The most important point in this networking is the MDM team performance:
    A. In fact the team has several strengths
        - Covers various important specialities: psychology, GP, psychiatry, community oriented personnel,
        - has extensive experiences in working with street children, children with disabilities and other areas of field work
        - motivated and enthusiastic
    B. Implementing a project adopting a networking approach is different from implementing field project. It needs additional attitudes and skills:
        - Applying networking skills: keeping the overall objective in mind during addressing the activities, sharing responsibilities and keeping the partners informed, reaching collective decisions, empowering instead of supervising, and motivating the partners. The team may need to be trained on how to deal with the different stages of team work (forming, storming and achieving).

C. Based on that, the expected roles of MDM team may be:
    - Forming different team works (task force) according to well defined standers and for achieving specific objectives.
    - Preparing for the meetings of the teams (task force) including setting the agenda,
    - Attending the meetings and making sure that the meetings include the objectives of the task force, planning, sharing responsibilities, indicators of achievements, setting time table , and follow up steps.,
    - Leading a collective decision making whenever it is needed,
    - Sharing information reports with partners
    - Conduct field visits to motivate the partners, follow up the implementation of responsibilities distributed during the meetings, and sharing experiences;
    - Link the works of different task forces to each other,
    - Gathering stories of success to publish and disseminate.
    - All these in addition to the regular roles as apart of MDM (planning, organizing, reporting, evaluation,,,,,,,)

Farid Antoun

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